

**Testing the effectiveness of a Practice Development  
intervention as an enabler of allied health  
leadership development**

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of Philosophy

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## **Certificate of Original Authorship**

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as part of the collaborative doctoral degree and/or fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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## List of Abbreviations

AI	Appreciative Inquiry
ALS	Action Learning Set
CASP	Clinical Appraisals Skills Programme
CEC	Clinical Excellence Commission
CINAHL	Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature
CLP	Clinical Leadership Program
CLI	Clinical Leadership Inventory
DAH	Director(s) of Allied Health
FoNS	Foundation of Nursing Studies
FTE	Full-time equivalent
HETI	Health Education and Training Institute
IIMS	NSW Incident Information Management System
IPDJ	International Practice Development Journal
LBQ	Leadership Behaviour Questionnaire
LEAHP Program	Leadership Excellence for Allied Health Professionals Program
LHD	Local Health District
LPI	Leadership Practices Inventory
MLQ	Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire
NDU	Nursing Development Unit
NHHRC	National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission
NHMRC	National Health and Medical Research Council
NHS	National Health Service
NSW	New South Wales

ORBIT	Online Reporting Business Intelligence Tool
OT	Occupational therapy
PAR	Participatory Action Research
PDU	Practice Development Unit
POWH	Prince of Wales Hospital
PRAXIS	Purpose, Reflexivity, Approaches, ConteXt, Intent, Stakeholders
PUGQ	Positive, Unconditional Generative Question
SESLHD	South Eastern Sydney Local Health District
SGH	St George Hospital
SN	Speciality Network
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
SSEH	Sydney/Sydney Eye Hospital
TSH	The Sutherland Hospital
UK	United Kingdom
UWES	Utrecht Workplace Engagement Scale

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## List of publications and presentations arising from this thesis

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Oral paper presentation: *Taking the LEAHP – Developing allied health leaders to enhance person-centred healthcare*, August 2017, 12th National Allied Health Conference, Sydney, Australia.



Oral paper presentation: *Creating futures - Speech pathologists leading the way*, May 2017, Speech Pathology Australia National Conference, Sydney, Australia.

*The Leadership Excellence for Allied Health Professionals (LEAHP) Program*, January 2017, NSW Directors of Allied Health State Meeting, Sydney, Australia.

Oral paper presentation: *Developing allied health leaders to enhance person-centred healthcare*, September 2016, International Enhancing Practice Conference, Edinburgh, Scotland.

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## Abstract

*Practice development* is an umbrella term that incorporates a variety of methods used to develop healthcare practice. It is underpinned by the concepts of person-centredness, culture, values, context and evidence-based practice.

Allied health clinicians are tertiary-qualified members of the healthcare team who work across the care continuum to provide a range of therapeutic interventions. Although effective healthcare provision is said to require leadership at all levels of an organisation, allied health leadership has not been extensively investigated in the literature, nor has its involvement with practice development.

This mixed methods study investigated the area of leadership development of allied health practitioners and examined whether practice development methodologies were effectual in equipping allied health leaders with skills that improved leadership effectiveness and enhanced the provision of person-centred healthcare. The principal aim of the study was to evaluate the outcomes of an allied health leadership development program – underpinned by the principles of practice development and transformational leadership– conducted in a large Australian public healthcare organisation. The effectiveness of this approach to enhancing allied health practice was tested.

This research commenced with a critical analysis of the allied health and leadership literature and of the use of practice development by allied health clinicians. An investigation was also undertaken with allied health leaders to describe and better understand the context and issues for allied health clinicians in New South Wales as well as to identify specific cultural aspects of allied health.

An allied health leadership framework was developed, informed by practice development and transformational leadership theories. This was followed by the design, implementation and evaluation of a ten-month allied health leadership program. The program was evaluated using a randomised control trial involving the use of a stratified, randomised pre-test/post-test group design, with a control group, to quantitatively measure the culture, engagement and leadership skills of study participants before and after the implementation

of the *South Eastern Sydney Local Health District Allied Health Leadership Development Program* (the intervention) in 2014–2015. A range of qualitative measures were also collected. A second leadership program was undertaken with an unmatched intervention group in 2015–2016.

The study examined whether the program enhanced leadership capability and improved workplace cultural measures. It also measured whether the program led to quantifiable practice change, service improvement and enhanced clinical governance, including specified measures of quality and safety.

This research found that the program led to demonstrable outcomes in transformational leadership, leadership outcomes, workplace culture and workplace engagement. It provided robust new evidence about the effectiveness of using person-centred approaches for allied health leadership development.

This study is unique in its contribution to advancing research pertaining to allied health leaders and leadership. It provides a new, empirically-based leadership development program for allied health and describes a novel approach using a randomised control trial method to evaluate an allied health leadership framework.